

CIA Is Said To Have Paid Viet Bishop

Associated Press

The CIA regularly infiltrated church groups and missionaries working abroad and once had a South Vietnamese Catholic bishop on its payroll, a former State Department intelligence specialist says.

The bishop, who headed a diocese outside of Saigon, was on the agency's payroll as recently as 1971, and a CIA "case officer" would fly in from Saigon for secret meetings with him, according to John Marks, the former State Department specialist.

Marks is director of a research project for the Center for National Security Studies, a private group frequently critical of the CIA.

In a study of the agency's relationships with church groups, Marks says: "Congressional and executive pressure has forced the CIA to maintain a hands-off stance toward a few groups like Peace Corps volunteers and Fulbright scholars, but religious organizations have never been treated by the agency with such deference."

A spokesman for the Senate panel probing the CIA said the committee is looking into the CIA's relationships with missionaries.

Marks' study says an unidentified Protestant missionary in Bolivia made regular intelligence reports to the CIA "as a patriotic duty and not for pay." The missionary was said to be "knowledgeable about the Communist Party and had all sorts of information about unions and farmers' cooperatives."

Marks said another Protestant missionary in Bolivia periodically passed on names of Bolivians he thought were Communists to U.S. embassy officials, who he assumed were with the CIA.

The agency also supplied money for some foreign religious programs "used to manipulate events in other countries or to push a political line congenial to the CIA," Marks said.